



Advising Your Patient to be Active

Brief Intervention Scripts

Patient Barriers	Health Professional Response	Rationale
<p>“I am too busy to exercise” OR “I don’t have the time to exercise.”</p>	<p>“I understand that you are very busy and that the physical activity guidelines may be unattainable at this time. It is, however, important for you to understand that there are significant benefits associated with any amount of increased activity or movement. Even 10-15 minutes of added activity daily can have a positive impact on your health. To start, try taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking at the back of the parking lot, or taking 10-minutes out of your day to go for a walk or to stretch. The benefits of exercise can be achieved by incorporating these short bouts of extra activity into your daily schedule.”</p>	<p>Cancer patients may have many physical, emotional, social, or environmental factors that can interfere with participating in a structured exercise program. Although we hope that all patients will be able to meet the physical activity guidelines, there are clear benefits in simply moving more. Encouraging patients to start with small, attainable goals will allow them to gain a sense of control and build their motivation to gradually increase their activity levels over time.</p>
<p>“I am very tired and do not have enough energy.”</p>	<p>“I understand that you are very tired and may not feel like you have enough energy to exercise. It is, however, important for you to understand that increasing activity levels can actually reduce feelings of fatigue. For most people, the hardest part is getting started. I would recommend incorporating short bouts of activity into your daily routine. Once you are able to build more movement into your day, you will start to notice an increase in energy levels, as well as increased motivation to continue to gradually increase the amount of activity you do each day.”</p>	<p>There are significant benefits associated with any amount of increased activity or movement, especially for individuals who are otherwise sedentary. It is important to encourage patients to start with small, attainable goals to allow them to gain a sense of control and build their motivation to gradually increase their activity levels over time.</p>

Patient Barriers	Health Professional Response	Rationale
<p>“I find it hard to motivate myself to exercise.”</p>	<p>“I understand that you may have a low desire to exercise right now. It is important, however, to consider the many benefits associated with even a slight increase in daily activity levels. Some of these benefits include increased energy, improved sense of self-confidence, improved quality of sleep, reduced stress, reduced treatment-related side-effects, reduced risk for cancer recurrence, and reduced risk of cancer-specific mortality. Even just ten minutes of light exercise each day can help you feel better. Always remember, “a little bit of movement is always better than nothing.”</p> <p>It would also be helpful to ask about personal goals and explain how activity may be beneficial in helping achieve those goals. For example, staying active might help an individual continue to be able to take care of children or grandchildren. Being more active has also been shown to improve social and romantic relationships with others.</p>	<p>After a cancer diagnosis, many individuals may lose sight of their previous goals and ambitions. It is important to remind patients of the benefits associated with physical activity, including the cancer specific benefits. Additionally, it is crucial to inform individuals that any increase in activity levels is better than none. By starting small, patients will gain a sense of control and build their motivation to gradually increase their activity levels over time.</p> <div data-bbox="1084 789 1479 1192" style="text-align: center;"> <p>The first step is always the hardest!</p> </div>
<p>“I don’t have access to a recreational facility.”</p>	<p>“Although having access to a recreational facility might be helpful, physical activity can be done anytime, anywhere. Many activities can be done from inside your home, or in your neighborhood. You will be able to achieve the many benefits of activity by walking around your block and/or using household items such as soup cans to do resistance training. Resistance training and full-body stretching can both be done while watching tv from the comfort of your own living room.”</p>	<p>It is a common misconception that exercise requires a gym membership or recreational facility. For many individuals, however, increasing the amount of movement they do each day is sufficient for them to reap the many health benefits. This may include going for a walk outside or getting up off the couch to stretch and/or do a few body-weight exercises. These are simple examples of activity that can be done by almost anyone, without even leaving the house.</p>

Patient Barriers	Health Professional Response	Rationale
<p>“I don’t know what activities are appropriate for me.”</p>	<p>“Any activity may be appropriate for you as long as you feel comfortable and safe when engaging in it. It is important to keep an open mind and to try new activities to find what works best for you. If you are uncomfortable or are experiencing pain during any activity, do not feel pressure to continue, there are likely many more activities that would be more appropriate for you. One of the most important factors when choosing an activity is enjoyment. You will be much more likely to stick to an activity routine if it is something that you enjoy.”</p> <p>It may also be helpful to discuss personal health/activity goals with the individual. This could include weight management, increased strength, and/or improved sense of well-being. Based on their individual goals you may recommend specific types of activity such as aerobic training, resistance training, or flexibility programs.</p>	<p>Exercise has been proven to be safe for most cancer patients. Patients should be encouraged to engage in any activity that they enjoy while being cautious that they are not experiencing side effects such as increased pain, severe fatigue, dizziness, and swelling of the arms or legs.</p> <p>Individuals are much more likely to stick to a plan and increase their activity levels over time if they are engaging in activities that they enjoy.</p>



This resource has been adapted from Alberta Health Services, Tobacco Free Futures Guidelines. For a complete list of references visit “Tobacco Free Futures, Chapter 22: Adults With Cancer.” It was approved by the Nova Scotia Cancer Patient Education Committee, February 2017. NSCCP-0076 Updated August 2019 ©Nova Scotia Health Authority This information will be updated every three years, or as new evidence emerges.